'Too many coincidences' surround gangland-style murder of Carrafa

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ROCKVILLE — Organized crime units in both Montgomery and New York City are still working to unravel the mystery of "too many coincidences" surrounding the death of Eugene (Gino) Carrafa, the antique car dealer who lived in Derwood until his gangland-style murder in late July.

A link between Carrafa and murdered Chicago mobster John Roselli, who both disappeared from their homes on July 28, and were found wrapped in chains and floating in the waters off Biscayne Bay, Fla., and Staten Island, N.Y., still is being studied. Roselli lived near Miami.

The similarities of their deaths has even come under the scrutiny of the FBI, which primarily was interested in Roselli's killing because of his plans to give additional testimony before a Senate committee looking into assassination plots against Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

After Roselli's body was discovered floating in an oil drum off Biscayne Bay, his car was found at the Miami Airport. New York police said this week that Carrafa's Continental Mark III was found at Kennedy National Airport in New York.

Carrafa, whom sources said was heavily in debt, left his Derwood home in the Mark III to visit his partner, Jay Knohl, who also disappeared in late August after forfeiting $150,000 bond for failure to appear in a New York court on sodomy charges.

New York police also have verified the fact Knohl and Carrafa were in Chicago the week of July 21, when the known companion of underworld figures there died of an "apparent" overdose. Janice Mae Piccerelli, the dead woman, was the former wife of Louis Piccerelli, who served in the Marine Corps with both Knohl and Carrafa.

Sources said Mrs. Piccerelli worked at the Millionnaires Club in Chicago until her death, and had just won a $49,000 workman's compensation claim. Her husband, at one time, owned the Skipjack bar in Deale, sources said.

New York police Thursday also verified the fact Carrafa's body washed up in a direct line with Knohl's waterfront home in New York, which is also in a direct line with the New Jersey coastline. Carrafa was found floating at Buoy 4, known as Crooks Point.

Montgomery's Organized Crime Unit recently released information that a connection had been uncovered between

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Carrafa and a business establishment which is frequented by members of the Cosa Nostra, in the Bronx area of New York. Police in New York said a piece of paper belonging to Carrafa had the word Romano written on it. Located in the Bronx is such an establishment, Romano's Funeral Home.

After Carrafa's death, sources said the body was picked up by employes of Albini's Funeral Home in Waterbury, Conn., where Carrafa's brother, Matthew, lives. Carrafa was buried in Waterbury Aug. 13, nine days after his body washed ashore.

Also missing is Knohl's bodyguard, Bob White, alias The Gorilla. New York police said White was last seen standing in Knohl's front yard the night Carrafa disappeared. Detectives confirmed that Knohl has a lengthy police record, and that White has been committed to mental hospitals on more than one occasion.

Police in New York also confirmed that Knohl's present housekeeper is the mother of a girl Knohl was charged with raping, and that both the girl and her mother are still living at his home in Sea Gate. "As far as she (the mother) is concerned, he (Knohl) walks on the water," one detective commented.

Carrafa and Knohl owned the classic car agency in Abingdon. On July 23, Carrafa reported three valuable cars stolen from the dealership. A $90,000 insurance policy on the vehicles recently had been increased to $157,000, and now an insurance investigator has joined the police team in their quest for an answer to the puzzling picture.

Several detectives have expressed the opinion there never were any cars to be insured in the first place. They solve that portion of the dilemma by stating that the insurance company "will never pay off. . .it's all a hoax."

Numerous theories have been aired on Carrafa's connection with the underworld. One is that he "got into something big before he realized the dangerousness of the situation." If so, police wonder what it was that he "knew too much about" in the past six months.

Another question to be answered is why Carrafa traveled so extensively from the west to the east, carrying large sums of money when the car agency "wasn't doing all that much business." And if he was such "a nice guy," why did he become involved in a business venture with a known criminal with underworld connections?

Some sources say organized crime is now inching its way into one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, Montgomery, which is a neighboring community of the District of Columbia, where convicted gamblers Charles (The Blade) Tourine and Joseph Francis Nesline are suspected of still being in operation.

Montgomery police already have released the fact Roselli had been in touch with Washington underworld figures just prior to his death. Those figures, they said, had been linked, in the past, to an identified Cosa Nostra soldier in the Vito Genovese family.